



**NORTH DAKOTA**  
DEPARTMENT of HEALTH



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## NEWS RELEASE

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*Please note: The North Dakota Department of Health is providing the following story about one woman's battle with breast cancer in an effort to encourage other eligible women to seek screening services through the Women's Way Program.*

### **Survivor Urges Others Not To Keep the Secret: There Is a Way with *Women's Way***

Bismarck, N.D.— Kathryn Wentz, 50, knew for at least a year the lump in her breast was probably cancerous, but she kept it secret. She didn't tell her husband. She didn't tell her best friend. She kept it secret because, as an uninsured bartender, she knew she couldn't pay for a mammogram or cancer treatments. "It wasn't so much the thought of having cancer that scared me. What really scared me was how I was going to pay for everything," Kathryn said.

It had been 10 years since Kathryn had screening for either breast or cervical cancer. Without insurance, health screenings were not a priority. Then last fall, Kathryn was watching television when a *Women's Way* public service announcement aired. *Women's Way* is North Dakota's breast and cervical cancer early detection program. The federally funded program helps women between the ages of 40 and 64 receive low- or no-cost mammograms and pap tests. "I saw the *Women's Way* ads before, but that time the woman's testimonial really talked to me. The statement that, 'there is a way with *Women's Way*,' really hit home. That's what made me call," Kathryn said.

Theresa Schmidt, *Women's Way* coordinator for Burleigh County, helped Kathryn fill out the forms and within a week, Kathryn had her first mammogram and Pap test in a decade. The Pap results showed no sign of cervical cancer. The mammogram, however, confirmed stage-3 breast cancer. "The cancer part didn't concern me; it was the money. The surgery-scheduling nurse told me I had a bigger problem. She told me I couldn't schedule a mastectomy until I got insurance or I could pay a big down payment. That was what really scared me," Kathryn said.

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She again contacted Theresa Schmidt at *Women's Way*. Theresa helped Kathryn enroll in Medicaid – *Women's Way* helped pay for cancer treatment. “Theresa really helped me. She had me scheduled within two weeks for surgery. Theresa helped me put the down payment on my life,” Kathryn said.

Surgeons removed Kathryn's left breast and eight lymph nodes. She will complete her chemotherapy treatment in April. With a quiet laugh, she brags about her new wig and how it outshines the thin hair she lost with chemo treatments. She is quick to thank the American Cancer Society for her new hairdo, and she is quick to thank Theresa Schmidt and *Women's Way* for her new lease on life. “I want to call Theresa my Saint Theresa, she helped me so much. *Women's Way* has done wonders for me. It would be a tragedy if it ever went away. I mean, what do you do if you are an uninsured woman? What other options are out there?” Kathryn asked.

Kathryn urges providers and patients to spread the word about *Women's Way*. “I don't think that many people know about this great program. Like the ad said, ‘they helped me and they can help you.’ Women should never have to keep cancer a secret because of money. There is a way with *Women's Way*,” Kathryn said.

For more information about *Women's Way*, call 1-800-44 WOMEN or visit the *Women's Way* website at [www.ndhealth.gov/womensway/](http://www.ndhealth.gov/womensway/).

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